



INFLUENTIAL RACIST NEO-PAGAN LIVES ON THE BUTTE HILL

August 6, 2019

White nationalist beliefs may have motivated the teenage shooter at the Gilroy Garlic Festival in California, who killed three people and wounded a dozen others in late July. Police arrived shortly after the attack began and killed the shooter. While trying to determine the perpetrator's motive, journalists [have noted](#) that a social media post by the shooter before the incident featured racial slurs and referenced a novel frequently glorified by white nationalists, *Might is Right*.

While *Might is Right* was originally published in the 1800s, a white nationalist living in Montana has helped market the book to racist neo-pagans for decades. Butte's Ron McVan, a longtime white nationalist, illustrated and published a version of *Might is Right* that is very popular with followers of racist strains of Norse-based religions.

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While we don't know which version of *Might is Right* the Gilroy shooter read, the book's potential influence on the attacker provides an opportunity to look at McVan, who moved to Butte after playing a significant role in creating and spreading Wotanism, an explicitly racist version of Odinism. In 1995, McVan joined David and Katja Lane in launching Wotanism out of St. Maries, Idaho, through an entity called 14 Words

Press. While McVan and Katja Lane worked out of the group's headquarters, [David Lane](#) resided in a prison cell for his role in a domestic white nationalist terror group called The Order.



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David Lane and The Order

In the early 1980s, The Order began a campaign of domestic terrorism to fund white nationalist groups and possibly jumpstart a race war. David Lane met the activists who would start The Order at Aryan Nations events in the early 1980s in Idaho. He joined the group when it formed. The Order engaged in extensive criminal activity. It bombed a Boise

synagogue. It robbed banks and armored cars to the tune of millions of dollars. Targeting the banking system made sense, as a common anti-Semitic conspiracy theory promoted by white nationalists claims Jews control the financial system. The Order also assassinated Jewish radio host Alan Berg. Lane drove the getaway car and helped plan the murder. For his crimes, Lane received 190 years in prison.

While in prison, Lane became a hero to the white nationalist movement. He dedicated his time to writing racist propaganda, some of which evolved into bedrock doctrine for the movement. He created the “14 Words,” which became a slogan for white nationalists: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children.” He also authored *88 Precepts*, which served as his manifesto for racists. The number “88” is frequently used by white nationalists. The letter “H” is the eighth letter of the alphabet, and 88 symbolizes “Heil Hitler.” The 14 Words and 88 are frequently used as a form of racist shorthand in the movement. Lane also wrote an introduction to a 1999 reprinting of *Might is Right*. He died in prison in 2007, and his [body was turned over for burial](#) to white nationalist April Gaede in Montana.

Lane didn’t just write books and slogans while in prison. He also created his own racist religion, Wotanism. Wotan is the Germanic word for Odin, and Lane said his racist theology’s acronym stood for “Will of The Aryan Nation.” For him, it was important that

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the white race have its own religion. Lane stated, “the White race cannot share Gods, religion, technology, food, women, territory or anything of value with another race.” Katja Lane married David Lane in 1994 while David was in prison. Along with McVan, they established 14 Words Press to promote the new religion. The Temple of Wotan was legally recognized as a church in 2000.

Wotanism: Explicitly Racist Odinism

Wotanism is a racist version of a pre-Christian, neo-pagan set of beliefs more commonly known as Odinism or Asatru. Wotanism worships Odin, Thor, and other Norse-Germanic gods as part of a theology that prioritizes the survival of Germanic culture and the Aryan race. It’s important to note that not all followers of Odinism and Asatru are racist, and many followers denounce the racist beliefs promoted by the likes of Lane and McVan.

In *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*, scholar Mattias Gardell notes that Wotanism features an “iron-willed warrior God” who helps “instill in the white race the determination and heroic qualities necessary for them to arise victoriously in the ongoing struggle for Aryan survival and prosperity.” For McVan, Wotanism literally exists in white people’s blood. McVan told Gardell that “unmixed Aryan blood carries genetic memories of the racial lineage with all its gods, demigods, and heroes.” McVan believes that Wotanism will serve as the

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This social media post features Ron McVan (left) with some Wotanism paraphernalia. catalyst to create the “Aryan super race.”

Katja Lane used similar language to McVan. She has claimed Wotanism will be a “vehicle to unite our race, give us a singular sense of identity as well as destiny.” McVan and the Lanes used 14 Words Press to spread their racist neo-pagan beliefs across the United States and to white nationalists in Europe, Russia, Australia, South Africa, and Latin America. They have also spread Wotanism into the prison system through an extensive outreach program.

Wotanism isn’t the only white supremacist version of Norse-based beliefs that exists. This description by the Southern Poverty Law Center helps explain the appeal and spread of Wotanism and other racist neo-pagan beliefs:

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“[Racist neo-pagan belief revives] a pre-Christian pantheon of Norse gods, is appealing to white supremacists because it mythologizes the virtues of early northern European whites.... It sings the virtues of the tribe, or folk, strongly emphasizing genetic closeness. And it credits whites with building civilization and an ethic of individual responsibility, even as they boldly slew wild boars, fought for their tribes and explored the far reaches of the known world...Odinism, which is closely related to Asatru, was much favored in Nazi Germany. Its Nordic/Teutonic mythology was a bedrock belief for key Third Reich leaders...Decades later, Odinism also influenced George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party.”

Again, it's important to recognize that not all followers of Norse-based religions are racist.

An [article](#) published by Political Research Associates examines the struggle by non-racists to reclaim their beliefs from white nationalists. The article notes that those who eschew racism and allow people from any ethnic background to join are termed “universalists.” On the other hand, white nationalists following racist versions of these theologies call themselves “folkish” and limit membership only to people with Northern European or Germanic ancestry. In 2012, a group called [Heathens United Against Racism](#) formed to

fight the “co-optation of our beliefs, traditions, and lore by racist groups.”

More recently, the hyper-masculinity, symbolism, and “might is right” mentality of racist neo-pagan beliefs is finding new audiences with the growth of the Alt-Right and the general spread of white nationalist activism around the globe.

McVan with a Plan

Ron McVan’s racist spiritual journey didn’t start with Wotanism. Born in Philadelphia, he spent most of his 20s traveling the country trying to sell his art. McVan searched for a religion that meshed with his white nationalist views, because he knew Christianity wasn’t the answer. “It [Christianity] was always too Jewish for me,” he once wrote. He’s also lamented that Christianity “takes away the warrior spirit.”

By the 1970s, McVan found the books authored by Ben Klassen, founder of [The Creativity Movement](#) and its racist and anti-Semitic religion known as “Creativity.” Creativity boils down to worshiping the white race. It teaches that white people are the “creators of all worthwhile culture and civilization.” It views the white race as nature’s finest creation and “racial treason,” which encompasses practically any interaction outside the white race, as “the worst of all crimes.” Creativity believes that Christianity is a lie perpetuated by Jews and refers to people of color as “mud races” and “jungle dwelling cannibals.” An integral part of Creativity doctrine is RAHOWA,

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an acronym standing for “Racial Holy War.” It’s used to describe a worldwide ethnic cleansing that will leave white people as earth’s only inhabitants.

Much like he would do with Wotanism, McVan wasn’t a rank-and-file follower of Creativity.

Instead, he moved to The Creativity Movement’s headquarters to work with Klassen. He became the editor of the group’s main publication, *Racial Loyalty*, and did graphic design for the group. However, as *Gods of the Blood* notes, he eventually found Creativity to be spiritually shallow and began looking into racist Asatru.

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This social media post by Ron McVan shows his belief that the genocide of the white race is happening.

By 1995, he had hooked up with David and Katja Lane to help with 14 Words Press and the spread of Wotanism. McVan threw himself wholeheartedly into spreading the racist theology, which he describes as “an ancestral faith that puts race first.” He wrote guidebooks for ceremonies and rites of passage that laid out how to practice Wotan. He also

contributed art and created jewelry, rune-staffs, folk knots, ceremonial drinking horns, and other materials to help spread Wotanism. In other words, as *Gods of the Blood* states, McVan “largely created the creed and ceremonies of the religion.”

In the early 2000s, Katja Lane and McVan had a falling out, which forced him to leave 14 Words Press. McVan claims Lane kept all the copies of his books that were on hand to sell. He describes Lane as a gold digger who just wanted to make money from David Lane’s name and reputation.

McVan Returns to Montana

Ron McVan wasn’t a stranger to Montana. Even after leaving The Creativity Movement, many Creators still viewed him as an ally. In 1999, he attended the group’s [annual convening](#) in Superior, Montana. *Gods of the Blood* notes that McVan also served on the committee that selected [Matt Hale](#) as the group’s leader in 1996. Hale, a law school graduate, applied to the Montana Bar Association for a license to practice law in the state, but he was turned down by the Association’s Character and Fitness committee.

Hale worked to build bridges between Creativity and Wotanism, saying both were anti-Christian and about saving the white race. Hale led The Creativity Movement until 2005 when he was sentenced to 40 years in federal prison for soliciting the murder of a federal judge. A former Montana Creator who

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left the white nationalist movement told MHRN that McVan visited Montana fairly often and stayed with a Creator in Missoula. The defector said McVan expressed interest in moving to Missoula, but it never happened.

By 2005, MHRN received reports that McVan was mailing publications to inmates in Montana from an address in his new home, Butte. He has continued to sell his books, and racist neo-pagans journey to Butte to visit him. Local human rights activists have taken notice and are concerned about having a national leader of racist neo-paganism in their community. As one local put it:

“Ron McVan was instrumental in infusing heathen mythology and Viking fetishism into the white nationalist movement. He wrote and illustrated several books on his brand of white supremacy, and these books have been very popular.

It would be one thing if McVan had come to Butte and kept his hateful rhetoric to himself.

People are entitled to their opinions, no matter how repugnant. However, he hasn't done that. Instead, he has been actively spreading his message through social media, various blogs, and through Amazon books. He has hosted several leaders of the movement here in Butte, including American Nazi Party organizer Elton Hall and Asatru Folk Assembly founder Stephen McNallen.”

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Local activists are smart to be concerned. McVan has discussed how he would like to see the Pacific Northwest become an Aryan Homeland. However, that's just the beginning. Once that's accomplished, McVan harkens back to Creativity's idea of RAHOWA, saying whites could "try to push back the nonwhite races and we would reclaim our boundaries, most particularly, Europe and the United States."

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This social media post is a group picture of racist neo-pagans who journeyed to Butte to visit Ron McVan (left).

Most people readily equate racism with a swastika or a person in a Klan robe. One of the challenges posed by McVan and other practitioners of racist neo-pagan beliefs is that they deploy symbols that are less obvious in their racism. Instead of just swastikas, McVan and his ilk are just as likely to use the Norse Sun Wheel, Life Rune, Thor's Hammer, or something similar. These more subtle forms of imagery allow them to avoid public criticism and open new lines of recruitment. While the symbols may change,

the underlying racism and anti-Semitism stay the same.

Ron McVan is a racist Viking living on the Butte Hill. However, his ideas, writings, and artwork continue to inspire white nationalists around the world. Similarly, racist neo-pagan ideas span the globe. Racist Odinists participated in the infamous Charlottesville Rally in 2017 which resulted in the killing of an anti-racist activist, Heather Heyer. Anders Breivik, the 2011 mass shooter in Norway who killed 77 people, also followed racist Odinism. As noted earlier, the recent shooter at the Gilroy Garlic Festival might fit this bill, too. Wotanism and other racist neo-pagan religions don't just exist in theological tracts. Instead, they inspire white nationalists to action, sometimes with deadly results. For that reason, it is important for Montanans to know that Ron McVan, a pioneering leader of these ideas, is now making his home in Butte.

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Other Resources on Racist Neo-Pagan Beliefs

In addition to the articles linked to in this blog post, you can check out the following for more information:

- Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*,
- Southern Poverty Law Center, [Neo-Volkisch](#)
- Think Progress, [The New Religion of Choice for White Supremacists](#), 13, 2015.
- Southern Poverty Law Center, [Hate in God's Name](#), 25, 2017.

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